

R 230856Z APR 92  
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3024  
INFO AMCONSUL PUSAN  
AMEMBASSY BEIJING  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY TOKYO  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
COMUSKOREA SEOUL KS//CJ-CC/BJ/BJ-CM-H/DJ/SJS/EJ-J/PAJ//  
SA CINCUNC KS  
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI  
JCS WASHDC  
SECDEF WASHDC  
CINCUNC SEOUL KS//UNCMAC//

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SEOUL 04375

CINCPAC FOR FPA

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KS](#) [KN](#)  
SUBJECT: KIM IL SUNG'S BIRTHDAY AND NEW TITLES FOR FATHER  
AND SON: THOUGHTS IN THE SOUTH

REF: SEOUL 3952

11. C - ENTIRE TEXT.

12. SUMMARY: WITH N/S NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUING OVER IMPLEMENTATION OF THE N/S BASIC AGREEMENT AND THE NON-NUCLEAR ACCORD, KIM IL SUNG'S APRIL 15 BIRTHDAY BASH, KIM'S NEW TITLE OF GENERALISSIMO, AND KIM JONG IL'S ELEVATION TO MARSHAL HAVE GENERATED ONLY MODEST PUBLIC INTEREST IN THE SOUTH. NORTH KOREA WATCHERS BELIEVE THE NEW TITLES CONFIRM EARLIER INDICATIONS THAT KIM SENIOR WILL NOT RETIRE, BUT THAT AT THE SAME TIME KIM JUNIOR WILL TAKE ON EVER GREATER RESPONSIBILITIES. MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE THE NORTH'S POLICY LINE TOWARD THE SOUTH WILL REMAIN UNCHANGED. END SUMMARY.

NEW TITLES  
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13. IN HONOR OF HIS 80TH BIRTHDAY ON APRIL 15 THE TITLE OF GENERALISSIMO (DAEWONSU) WAS CONFERRED UPON KIM IL SUNG. ON APRIL 20, THE DPRK ANNOUNCED THAT THE NORTH KOREAN WORKERS PARTY HAD CONFERRED THE TITLE OF MARSHAL (WONSU) ON KIM JONG IL AND O CHIN-U, MINISTER OF THE PEOPLE'S ARMED FORCES. ACCORDING TO JAPANESE PRESS REPORTS, KIM JONG IL ALSO MET WITH MEMBERS OF THE JAPANESE DELEGATION WHO ATTENDED KIM SENIOR'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION. WHILE KIM JONG IL HAS MET FOREIGNERS IN THE PAST, THE OCCASIONS HAVE BEEN FEW AND FAR BETWEEN.

"PROMOTIONS" NOT UNEXPECTED  
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14. MOST NORTH KOREA OBSERVERS IN THE SOUTH EXPECTED SOME CHANGES AROUND KIM IL SUNG'S BIRTHDAY. DR. KIL JEONG WOO OF THE RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR NATIONAL UNIFICATION TOLD POLOFF APRIL 20 THAT AT HIS BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION KIM SENIOR OFFICIALLY DESIGNATED HIS SON AS HIS SUCCESSOR (SOMETHING HE HAD NEVER DONE BEFORE) AND MADE THE OCCASION AN OPPORTUNITY FOR KIM JONG IL'S "COMING OUT," I.E., WAS INTRODUCED BY HIS FATHER AND MET WITH SOME FOREIGN VISITORS.

15. KIL OBSERVED THAT IT WAS LOGICAL FOR KIM JONG IL TO BECOME MARSHAL ONCE HIS FATHER HAD BECOME GENERALISSIMO. ACCORDING TO KIL, THE TITLE OF MARSHAL IS HONORARY AND POLITICAL IN NATURE AND DOES NOT CARRY GREAT MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE, ESPECIALLY SINCE KIM JUNIOR WAS MADE SUPREME COMMANDER LAST DECEMBER. KIL SUGGESTED THAT THE CONFERRAL OF THE NEW TITLE SYMBOLICALLY FORMALIZES KIM JUNIOR'S INHERITANCE OF HIS FATHER'S POSITION WITHOUT HAVING HIM TAKE OVER. KIM IL SUNG STILL HAS THE TITLES OF PRESIDENT AND GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE KOREAN WORKERS PARTY (AND NOW GENERALISSIMO). KIL SAID THAT KIM JUNIOR IS RUNNING THE DAY-TO-DAY AFFAIRS OF THE COUNTRY AND PROBABLY PLAYS AN

IMPORTANT ROLE IN FORMULATING FOREIGN POLICY. IT WOULD SEND THE WRONG SIGNALS, ACCORDING TO KIM'S ANALYSIS, FOR KIM JONG IL TO TAKE OVER HIS FATHER'S ROLE COMPLETELY DURING SUCH AN UNCERTAIN PERIOD FOR THE NORTH.

¶6. MOFA INTER-KOREA POLICY DIVISION DEPUTY DIRECTOR NAM SANG-JUNG GAVE POLOFF A SIMILAR INTERPRETATION ON APRIL 22. NAM SAID THAT KIM IL SUNG NOW "LEADS AND REIGNS" OVER NORTH KOREA, WHILE KIM JONG IL "CONTROLS AND RUNS" THE COUNTRY. HE, HOWEVER, CITED THE PROMOTION OF O CHIN-U TO MARSHAL ALONG WITH KIM JONG IL AS UNEXPECTED. HE EXPLAINED THAT O'S PROMOTION MIGHT SERVE TWO PURPOSES. FIRST, NAM EXPLAINED, THE NORTH CAN NOW ARGUE THAT THE SUCCESSION WAS NOT DYNASTIC SINCE O AND KIM JUNIOR SHARE THE SAME TITLE. SECOND, THE PROMOTION OF O COVERS KIM JONG IL'S WEAK MILITARY FLANK BECAUSE O PRESUMABLY ENJOYS STRONG SUPPORT AMONG MILITARY LEADERS.

#### NO EFFECT ON NORTH/SOUTH DIALOGUE

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¶7. KIL, NAM, AND OTHERS WE HAVE TALKED TO DOUBT THAT THE TITLE CHANGES IN THE NORTH WILL SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT NORTH/SOUTH DIALOGUE. BOTH EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT HAVING SIGNED THE IAEA SAFEGUARDS AGREEMENT AND THE TWO NORTH/SOUTH AGREEMENTS, THE DPRK WILL PRESS FOR BETTER RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., JAPAN, AND OTHER COUNTRIES, AT THE SAME TIME STRINGING OUT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENTS.

#### SOUTH KOREAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE NORTH UNCHANGED

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¶8. KIM IL SUNG'S BIRTHDAY BASH GENERATED ONLY MODEST PUBLIC INTEREST IN THE SOUTH. THE KIMS STILL RULE THE DPRK, AND NEGOTIATIONS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF N/S DIALOGUE AGREEMENTS HAVE YET TO ACHIEVE TANGIBLE RESULTS. WITH THE BIRTHDAY SPOTLIGHT ON THE "GREAT LEADER," SOUTH KOREANS WERE REMINDED OF KIM IL SUNG'S PERSONAL ROLE AS THE MAIN OBSTACLE TO PROGRESS TOWARD REUNIFICATION.

#### COMMENT

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¶9. FROM ALL INDICATIONS, THE SUCCESSION PROCESS IS UNDERWAY. KIM JONG IL RUNS THE COUNTRY ON A DAY TO DAY BASIS. KIM SENIOR, HOWEVER, RETAINS HIS POWER AS THE SUPREME FIGURE IN THE NORTH. HE WILL IN ALL LIKELIHOOD MAINTAIN HIS TITULAR SUPERIORITY WELL INTO THE PERIOD AHEAD.

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